

An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely San Francisco, showing a dense pattern of streets and buildings. A prominent river or waterway runs diagonally from the top right towards the bottom right, with a bridge crossing it. The text "Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan" is overlaid in the center, and "June 15, 1998" is at the bottom center.

Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan

June 15, 1998

Table of Contents

Introduction

2

Implementation

5

Culture & Economy

7

Housing

15

Public Spaces & Public Safety

21

Accessibility

31

China town/International District Strategic Plan

In Appreciation

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Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan

Introduction

The Chinatown/International District is one of the most historic and unique neighborhoods in the city of Seattle. Its special character cannot be summed up in one sentence, or even in one paragraph, for it is many things—numerous Asian cultures, longtime residents, a close-knit social network--that together create the community's unique fabric.

We are a community characterized by a sizable elderly population, significant low-income households, and a large number of affordable housing units. We are primarily small businesses as well as social service and community development organizations. We are a delicate social connection for many elderly. We are a regional hub for Asian-Pacific American commerce and culture.

But the Chinatown/International District also faces the challenge of many external forces that could change its unique character. What are these forces? They are outcomes of the city and region's economic boom, a trend that brings with it:

- expected regional population increase of 60,000 in the next 2 years,
- 130,000 new jobs in Puget Sound in the next 2 years,
- a major housing squeeze,
- more construction, higher rents, increased land values.

Closer to home, the economic boom is felt in the numerous development projects in South Downtown: a new baseball park, football stadium, Union Station, King Street Station, and major transportation projects. And the growth of downtown as a regional employment, shopping, civic and cultural center has made it an increasingly desirable place to live and work. The pursuit of an "18-hour downtown" will bring more retail, dining, entertainment.

How will these impact the Chinatown/International District? What changes will take place in our "Hilltop" residential area as downtown grows? How can Union Station be a good neighbor? Can we take advantage of the good things from these impacts and prepare for the possible negatives, such as traffic and congestion?

This Strategic Plan looks at how the future of the neighborhood will shape up in light of these questions. The recommendations reflect an overall vision:

- **Cultural and Economic Vitality**
- **Housing** that is Affordable and Diverse
- **Public Spaces** that are Safe, Dynamic and Pedestrian-friendly,
- **Accessibility** both Within and To the neighborhood for all modes.

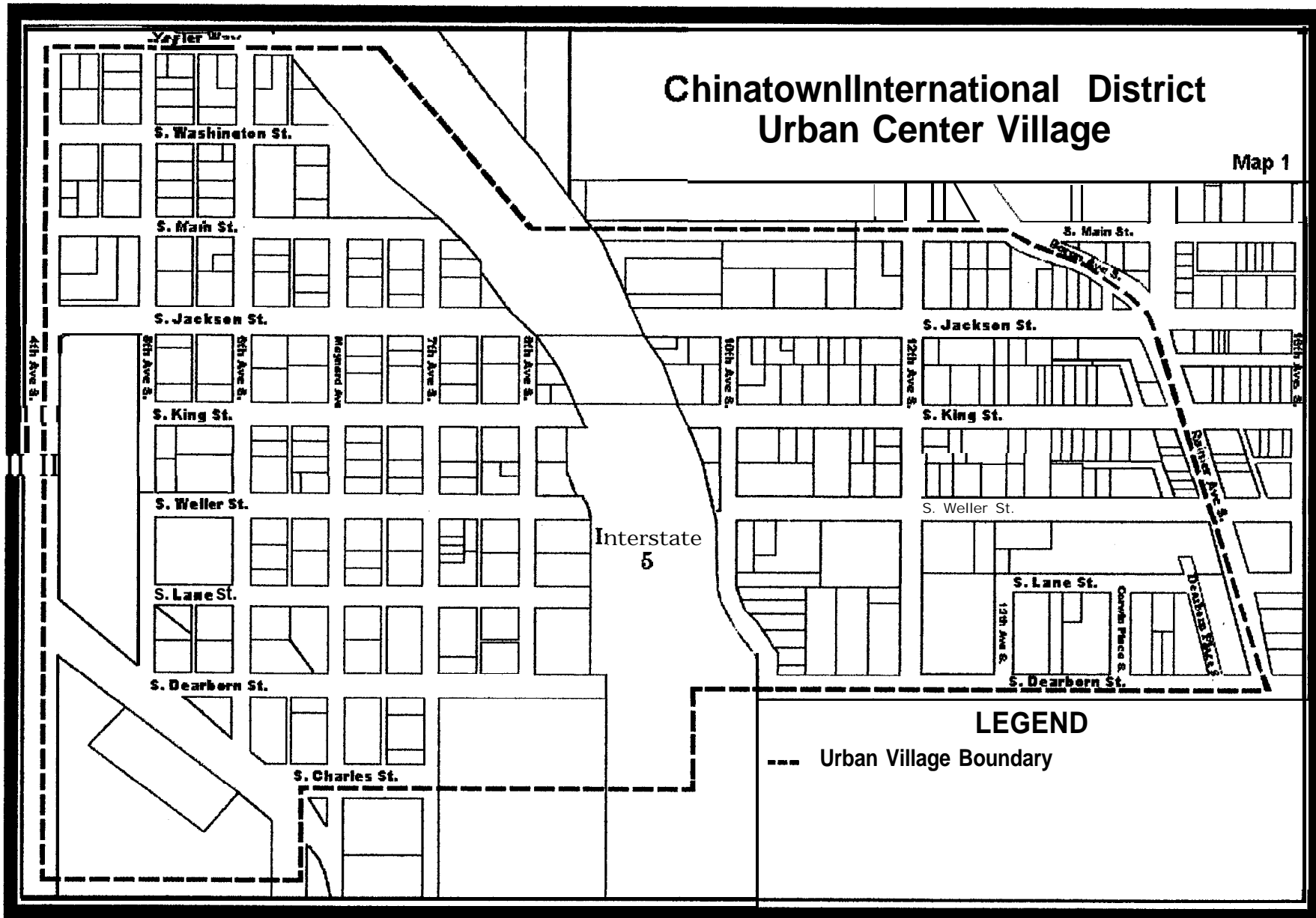
The plan is organized to be as user-friendly as possible.

- The first section, Implementation, lays out the strategies for achieving the plan recommendations.
- The next four sections include: Culture and Economics, Housing, Public Spaces, and Accessibility.
- Each part includes:
 - a summary of the background issues in that specific area
 - a table of recommended action strategies and
 - any relevant maps and illustrations.
- The Recommendations are on colored pages for easier reference.

We hope this plan can serve as a tool to help the community take action with the City and other partners to carry out the needed changes to sustain the Chinatown/International District as a truly livable community.

Chinatown International District Urban Center Village

Map 1



Community Demographics

- total current population of Chinatown/International District: 2,000+
- diverse ethnic groups, with large numbers of Asian-Pacific Islander and Caucasian.
- over half of population are elderly over 60 years; among API, 62% are over 60 years old.

Figure 9 Population by Race, 1990

Race	% of Population
Asian-Pacific Islander	55%
Caucasian	36%
African-American	5%
Native American	3%
Other	1%

Source: 1990 Census of Population

- primarily low-income; among elderly, fixed incomes very low.
- only 25% of households have wage income.

Figure 2 Household Income

Household Type	Median Income (1990)
non-family households	\$5,589
family households	\$10,147
Asian-Pacific Islander	\$6,159
Caucasian	\$8,331
African-American	\$6,000

Source: 1990 Census of Population

China to wn/In terna tional District Strategic Plan

Implementation

Objective: to ensure the recommendations in the Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan reach full implementation.

In 1992, the International District completed a community plan. Although this plan was not formally adopted by the city, it involved extensive community outreach and laid out key neighborhood issues.

The current planning efforts have built on that process by taking out relevant key issues, adding new issues that have developed in the last six years, and completing detailed analysis that can lead to specific, concrete actions.

Based on community input, the approach to this planning stems from several key principles:

- build on previous work already completed
- complete analysis to get to concrete actions
- structure an ACTION plan
- minimize unnecessary “process” but seek community involvement and input where appropriate
- fast-track the process to reach completion as soon as possible.

As a result, the Phase 2 planning took place between December 1997 and May 1998. Over these six months, committees of community members reviewed work in a specific area each month: Transportation, Economic Development, Culture & Nature, Community Services, and Land Use & Regional Growth.

Along the way, several milestones took place. For the first time, high school youth were involved in the planning through activities such as collecting data and completing surveys. At the end of March 1998, *Picture I.D: A Community Design Workshop* brought together design professionals and community members to give vision to key recommendations. Some of the products from that weekend are incorporated in this plan. And outreach to the community has been ongoing and will continue.

The Implementation Actions for the Plan focus primarily on:

- continuing efforts already taking place to implement recommendations,
- identifying short-term actions that can be started immediately,
- seeking plan approval from City Council by the end of 1998, in order to obtain Early Implementation Funding,
- developing a community position to oversee Plan implementation,
- coordinating outreach with various community organizations to support implementation, and
- strengthening partnerships with City departments and other outside groups such as First and Goal, Inc. to leverage additional resources for implementation.

The goal underlying all the Implementation strategies is to guarantee that the work put into creating the Plan will not be wasted, and that this document does not become a “shelf plan” but truly a vehicle for positive change in Chinatown/International District.

Implementation--Recommended Actions

Action Strategy	Participants	Timing/Cost Est.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue current actions to implement recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> various community and City orgs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin implementation of additional recommendations that can be started immediately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> InterIm, ID Forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> summer/fall 1998.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish plan and seek approval by September 1998 to obtain Early Implementation Funding to support activities in 1999. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> InterIm, Dept. of Neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by September 1998
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With community consensus, structure a position to oversee implementation of neighborhood plan and football mitigation, coordinate with various participants, and provide follow-up actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ID Forum, InterIm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fall 1998
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to strengthen partnerships with external groups including City of Seattle departments, First and Goal Inc, baseball PFD, and major developers, to leverage resources for implementation of some recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> InterIm, community, partner organizations and departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate outreach with various community organizations to provide support on appropriate plan recommendations, for example CAP role on public safety activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> InterIm, CAP, IDHA, CIDBIA, SCIDPDA, ACRS, CISC, Wing Luke, Little Saigon BDA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing

Cultural & Economic Vitality

Objective: thriving businesses, organizations, and cultural institutions.

Cultural and Economic Vitality includes not only businesses, but also the organizations and cultural institutions which are a part of the community's economy. Specific issues and problems on which the plan recommendations are based include:

- Lack of a comprehensive, community-wide strategy to market not only businesses, but also culture and events.
- Family associations and localized community groups such as Luck Nghi Musical Club are at a critical stage of needing physical space, coordinated activity, and additional resources.
- Sports event goers offer potential patronage for neighborhood businesses and culture but how to capture that?
- Certain locations offer potential for new business location (Map 3).
- Some storefronts are unappealing and do not encourage customer patronage (Map 3).
- Lack of safe, dynamic night-time activity (Map 4).
- Small businesses have a fairly high turnover rate and lack links and access to external resources that can assist in business development.

- Some community agencies lack meeting or office space, while the neighborhood as a whole lacks an open, accessible, multi-purpose community recreation center.
- Infrastructure (water, power, sewer, garbage) must be adequate to support long-term community development.

The strategies in this area are grouped into the following clusters, each of which has one or more related actions. Together, the actions directly address the previously listed issues.

- **Marketing-activities** to promote the marketing of neighborhood businesses, events and cultural opportunities.
- **Business Improvements-strategies** to encourage greater customer patronage of individual businesses.
- **Business Resource Center-to** assist businesses and organizations in finding external resources, and support job creation.
- **New Businesses-to** encourage new locations.
- **Night-time Activity**—tapping into a new market for businesses.
- **Community Recreation Center-a** multi-purpose space for community programs and associations.
- **Utilities-ways** to make sure infrastructure supports future community needs.

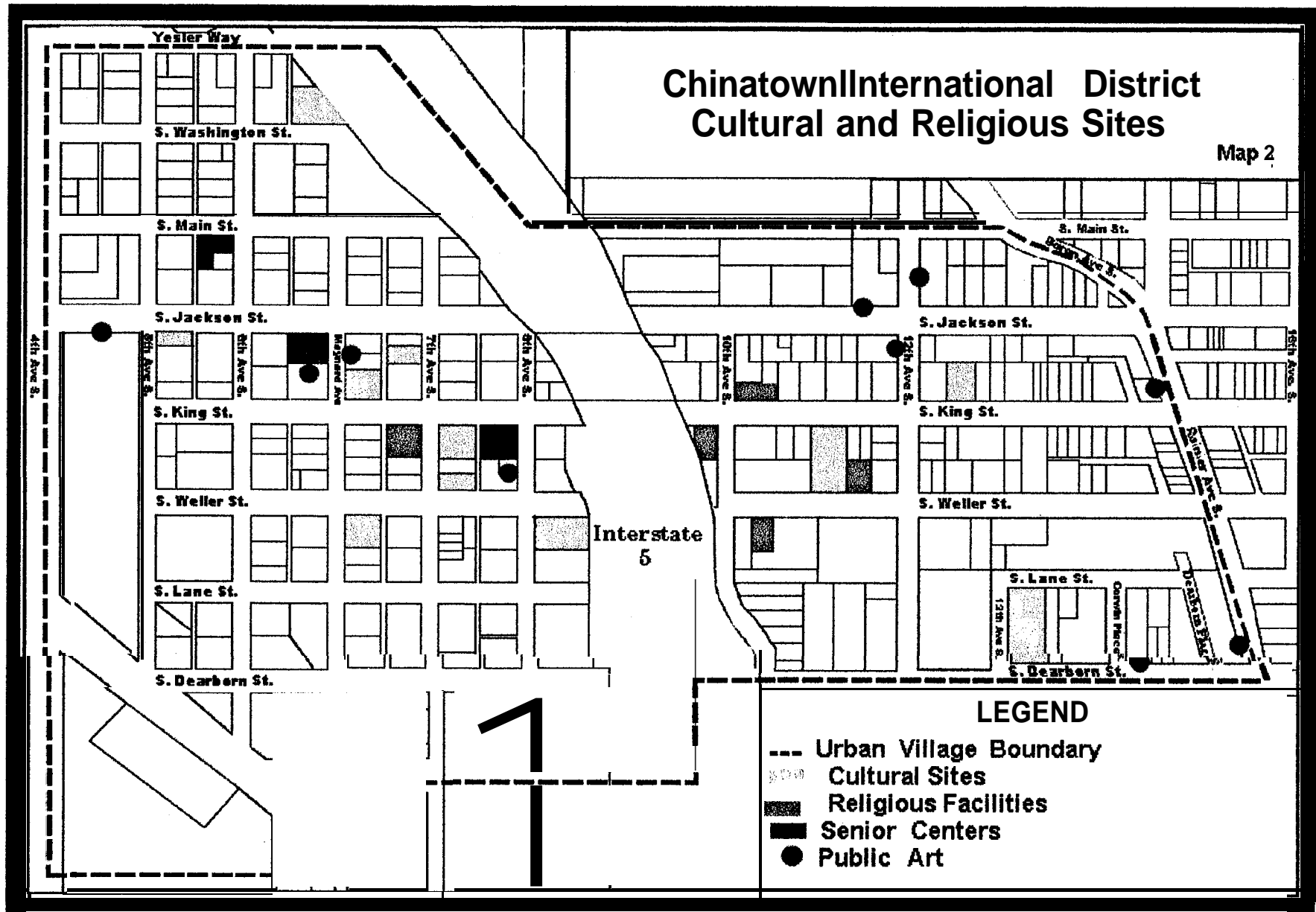
Cultural and Economic Vitality--Recommended Actions

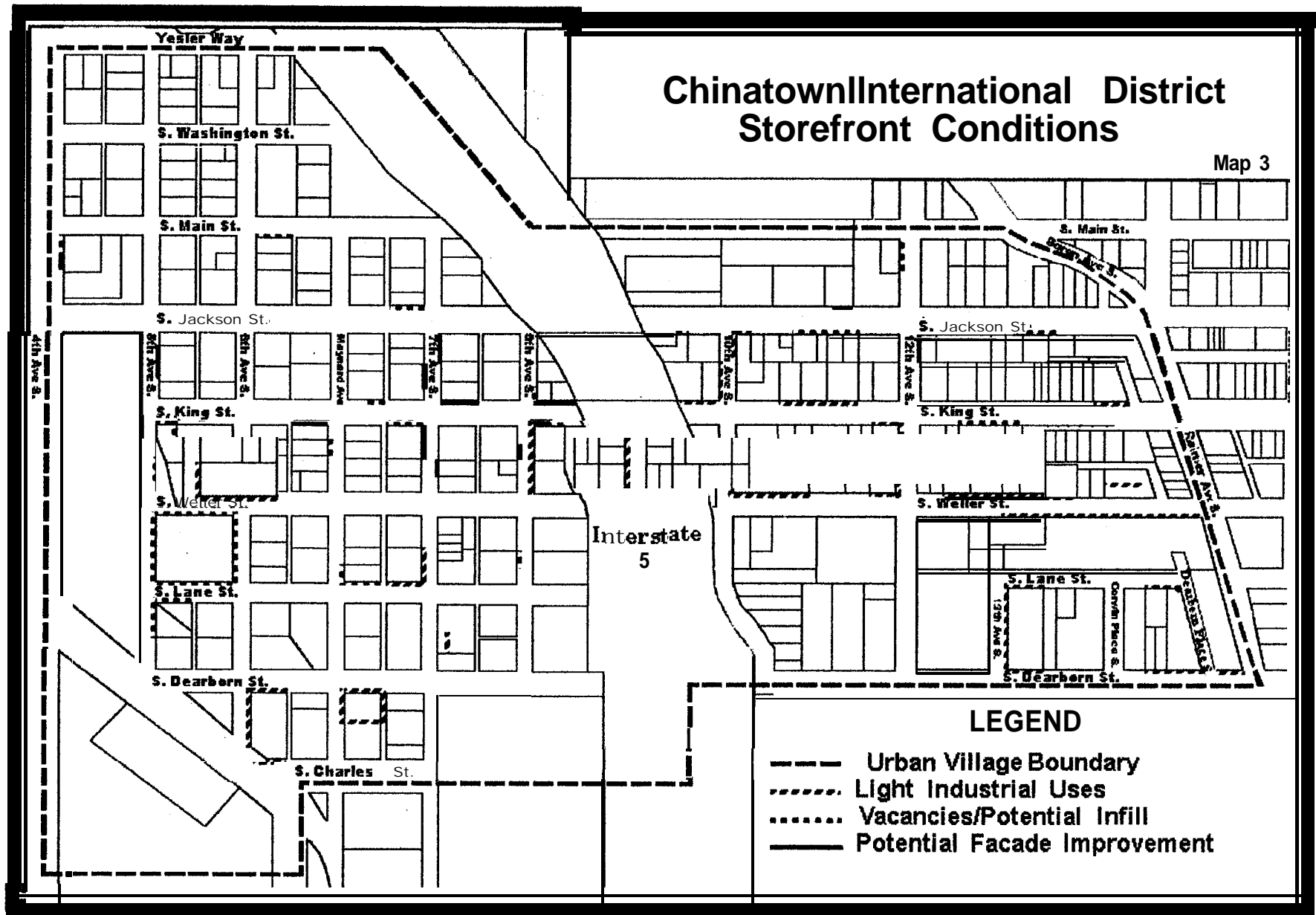
Action Strategy	Participants	Timing/Cost Est.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARKETING--Continue efforts to aggressively market the community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build on BIA Marketing Committee and include non-businesses in order to more comprehensively promote entire community, especially family associations and “localized” community groups such as Luck Nghi Musical Club and Kay Ying Senior Club. • develop a Community Calendar that promotes business, culture, landmarks, events and revitalize use of bulletin board at King & 7th (Map 2). • develop “familiarization tours” for regional and national media/press. • train “front-line workers” in neighborhood restaurants and businesses to promote tourist-friendly service. • work with football to recruit more advertising in local papers and to promote the neighborhood in event programs, ads. • develop theater/restaurant packages to encourage event goer patronage of neighborhood cultural institutions and businesses. • coordinate potential football “concession booth” with Wing Luke Museum’s new “ID Tour” program element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIA Marketing Committee, InterIm, First and Goal, other community organizations, International Examiner, Asian Weekly, PFD, NWAAT, Theatre Off Jackson, Chong Wah Association, Alliance of Chinese Associations, Wing Luke Museum, Little Saigon Merchants Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS • Develop a Facade Improvement Fund (Map 3 and Figures 3 through 10). • Outreach to individual businesses to encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opening at earlier hours to reach weekday commuter market. • vending on sidewalks to improve pedestrian environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIA, InterIm, CAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER--Develop a neighborhood-based BRC to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connect businesses with outside sources of TA and loans. • lobby Seattle offices of Small Business Administration and Office of Economic Development to provide multilingual resources. • provide shared equipment for smaller non-profits in the community. • find start-up funding for Little Saigon Merchants Association. • outreach to corporations to link with neighborhood businesses, which could provide resources for: management training, school-to-work programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIA, InterIm, First and Goal, Turner Construction (Apprenticeship Program), IDHSS, ACRS, CISC, Port JOBS, SJI, Little Saigon Merchants Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-4 years

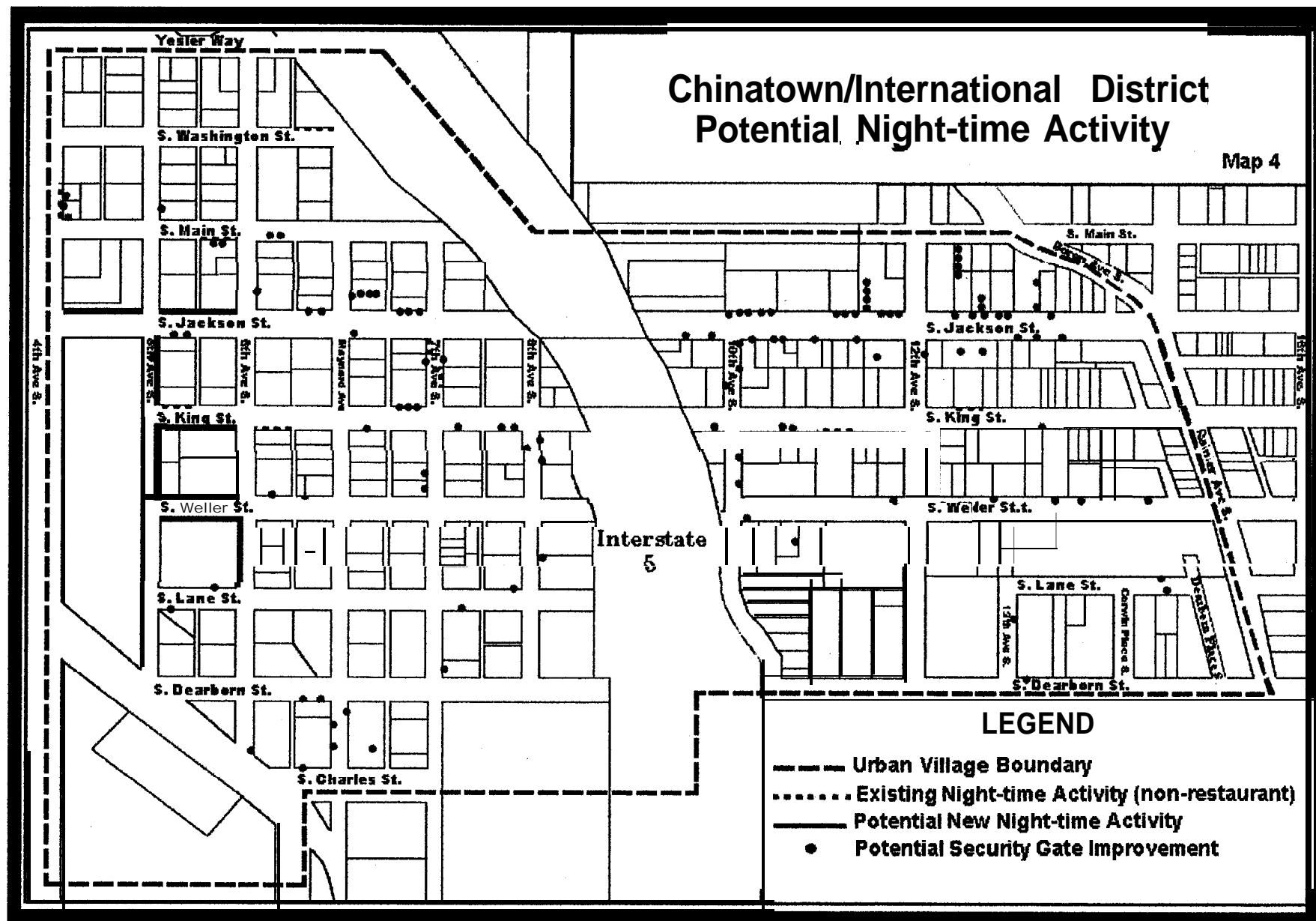
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pursue employment opportunities such as football mitigation Work Training Program, Youth Apprenticeship Program, business concessions in stadium and contracting opportunities. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEW BUSINESSES—Work with City to create tax incentives at designated sites to encourage location of potential businesses in vacant areas (Map 3). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • InterIm, BIA, City OED. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIGHT-TIME ACTIVITY-Promote lively and safe night-time activity (Map 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lobby for expanded bus tunnel hours. • targeted promotion at Convention Center. • using Facade Improvement Fund to encourage business owners to replace unappealing security grates with alternative pedestrian-friendly devices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIA Marketing Committee, InterIm, Metro. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-4 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with PDA/Village Square Phase 2, Asian Resource Center, CISC, ACRS, Chinese Cultural Center to figure out best way to provide needed community recreation space and programs—existing and new. • partner with football to expand and promote neighborhood youth sports programs as part of recreation center. • work with family associations to coordinate potential space needs within community center and actively market associations' programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDA/Village Square Phase 2, ARC, CISC, ACRS, Chinese Cultural Center, Chong Wah Association, InterIm, Denise Louie Childhood Education Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

UTILITIES

Action Strategy	Participants	Timing/Cost Est.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate water mains' replacement into City budgeting process NOW to ensure full upgrades over the next 20 to 25 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle Water Dept, InterIm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with City to replace combined sewer system with separated system over the long-term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle Drainage & Wastewater, InterIm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 - 15 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with businesses and waste carriers for more frequent pick-ups to help reduce overflow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote education and alternatives to businesses disposing lard into drainage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Seattle City Light for long-term undergrounding of power lines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • InterIm, Seattle City Light. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years







Examples of Potential Facade Improvements



Figure 3

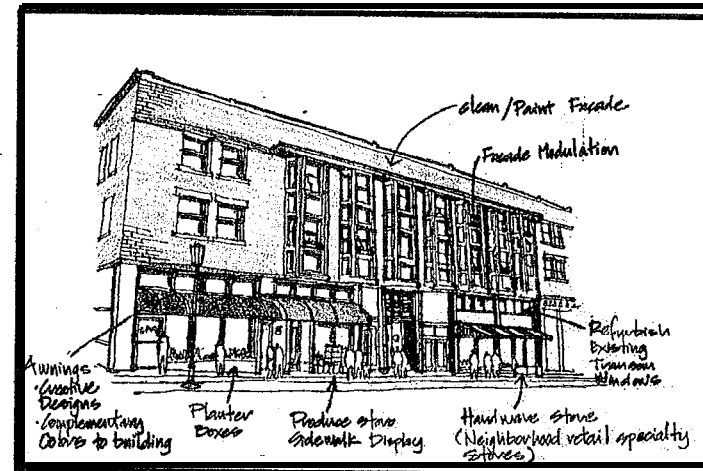


Figure 4

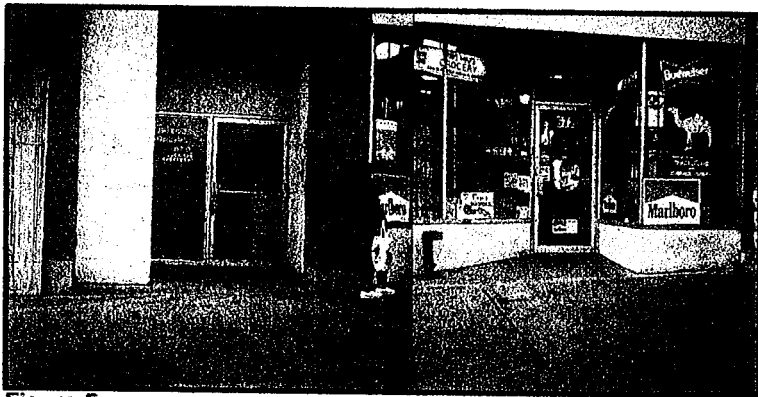


Figure 5

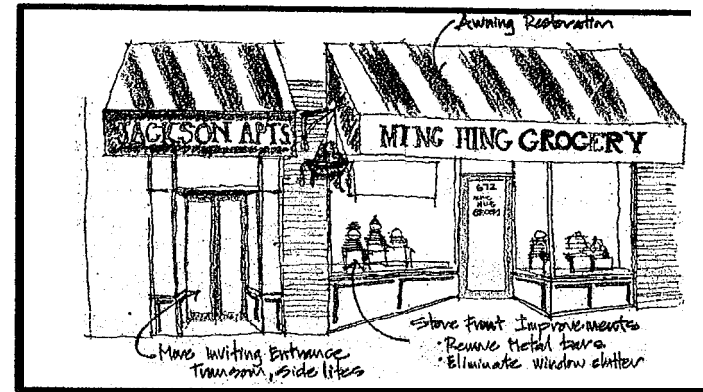


Figure 6

Examples of Potential Facade Improvements



Figure 7

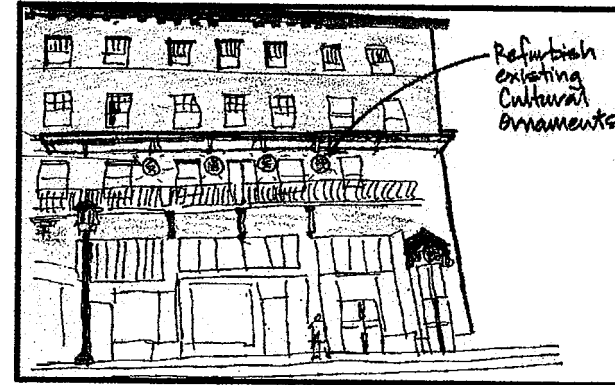


Figure 8

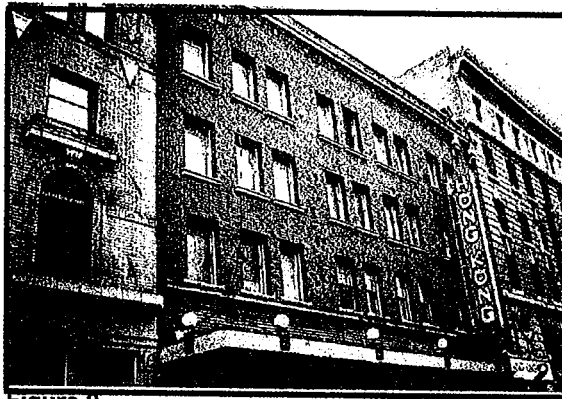


Figure 9

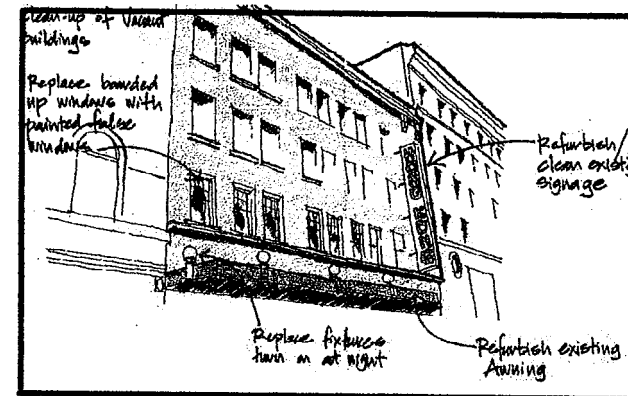


Figure 10

Housing Diversity & Affordability

Objectives:

- **diversification of housing stock to include more moderate income and family housing.**
- **preservation of affordable housing units.**
- **rehabilitation of vacant and sub-standard buildings.**

Many factors impact the community's ability to achieve the housing mix it desires. Specific issues and problems on which the plan recommendations are based include:

- **Need to preserve existing affordable housing for residents the community traditionally serves, especially in light of expiring Section 8 subsidy contracts.**
- **Lack of family housing and moderate income units stifles community's ability to sustain neighborhood businesses (Map 5).**
- **Need to ensure other downtown neighborhoods also take responsibility for creating affordable housing.**
- **Rising land values and nearby development make it difficult to keep land affordable for low-income housing.**
- **Financing for affordable housing and mixed-use projects is a major obstacle to project development.**
- **Owners of some vacant or sub-standard buildings may lack incentive and/or knowledge to upgrade property.**

The strategies for Housing are grouped into three clusters which reflect the three key housing objectives

- **Housing Diversification-activities** to encourage creation of more family housing as well as moderate income units.
- **Affordable Housing-strategies** to preserve existing low-income units.
- **Housing Rehabilitation-ways** to support upgrading of existing vacant and sub-standard buildings (Figures 13 through 18).

Of the listed recommendations, several are currently under discussion for implementation at City-level, as part of Mayor Paul Schell's new Housing Action Agenda. These include a property tax exemption for low-income multifamily housing, as well as streamlining of the construction permitting process in the Department of Construction and Land Use.

In addition, ongoing support for housing development research has been provided by the University of Washington Law Clinic, and it is hoped this will continue as the community works towards achieving its housing goals.

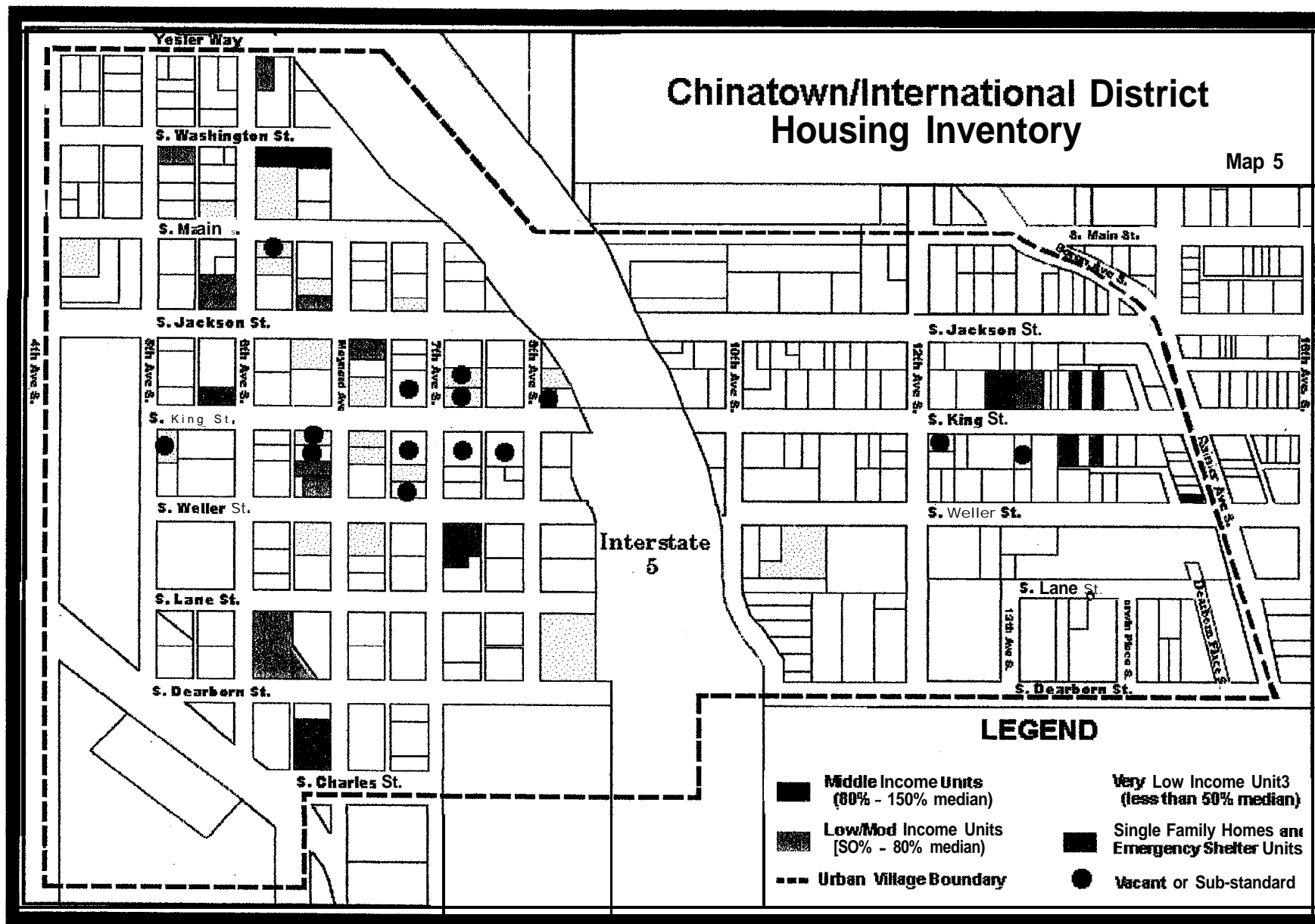
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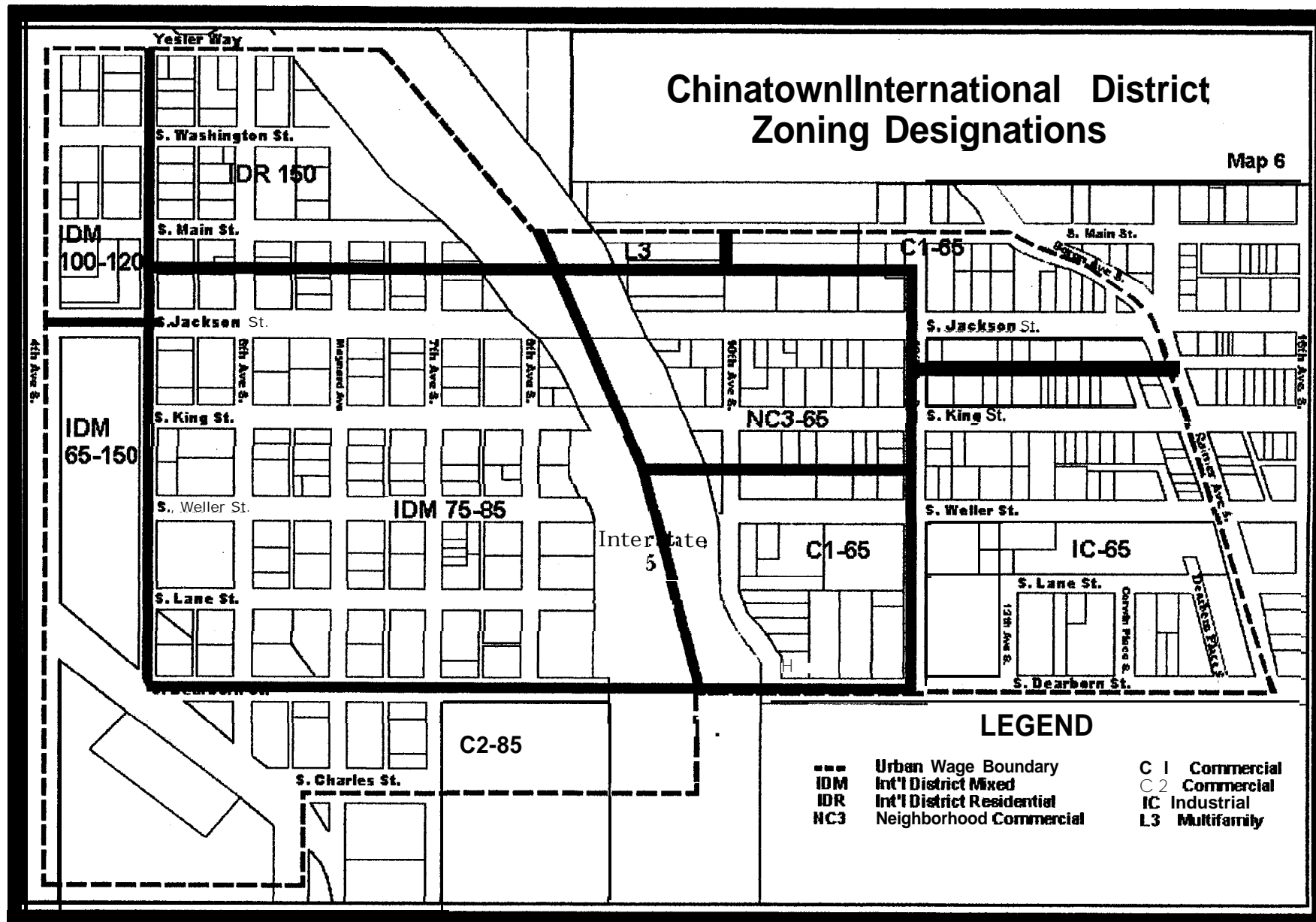
Housing Diversity and Affordability— Recommended Actions

HOUSING DIVERSIFICATION		
Action Strategy	Participants	Timing/Cost Est.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop TDR and density bonus programs to encourage greater housing development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-4 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with downtown neighborhoods to split “fair share” of low income housing units. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City, InterIm, SCIDPDA, Downtown Urban Center Planning Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years

PRESERVATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING		
Action Strategy	Participants	Timing/Cost Est.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage City funds for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formation of Community Land Trust re-structuring financing of expiring subsidy contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City, SCIDPDA, InterIm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage more federal low-income tax credits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-4 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop inclusionary zoning for market-rate developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City, community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-4 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure lender commitment to finance more mixed-use projects, including model project: International District Village Square Phase 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City, SCIDPDA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a 10-Year Property Tax Exemption for low-income multifamily development, based on RCW 84.14 (1995). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City, InterIm, SCIDPDA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue partnership with University of Washington Law Clinic to research and develop housing development/land trust models. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> InterIm, Law Clinic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing

HOUSING REHABILITATION (Figures 13 through 18)		
Action Strategy	Participants	Timing/Cost Est.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline DCLU construction permitting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage City funds for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> acquisition and rehabilitation of vacant and sub-standard buildings (Map 5). technical assistance and outreach by community non-profits to owners of vacant and sub-standard buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City, SCIDPDA, InterIm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 years





Housing Statistics

- total housing units: 2,030 of which:
- 85% serve residents with income below 50% of median.

Figure 11 Housing Stock

Housing Type	Median Income	Total Units
middle income	80% - 150%	82
low-moderate, subsidized	50% - 80%	172
low-moderate, unsubsidized	50% - 80%	20
very low, subsidized	under 50%	831
very low, unsubsidized	under 50%	573
frail elderly		125
emergency shelter		227
single family homes		9

- vacancy rate very low: 2 - 3%
- over 60% of units are SRO or studio
- 7 vacant buildings exist
- 5 occupied buildings are sub-standard, totaling 440 units.

Figure 12 Housing Unit Breakdown

Unit Type	Total Units	% of Total
SRO	814	40%
studio	431	21%
1 -bedroom	577	28%
2-bedroom	34	2%
3-bedroom	1	<1%
single family homes	9	

Typical Vacant and Sub-standard Buildings

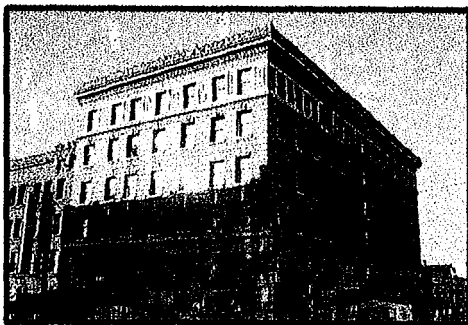


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18